

Spring 2001

## Class, Cultism, and Multiculturalism

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### Citation Details

McLaren, P., & Farahmandpur, R. (2001). Class, Cultism, and Multiculturalism. *Multicultural Education*, 8(3), 2-14.

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# Class,

# Cultism,

# Multiculturalism

By Peter McLaren  
Ramin Farahmandpur

*If this were a dictatorship it'd be a  
heck of a lot easier.*

—George W. Bush

## Who Wants to be a Millionaire?

The new millennium has finally arrived with Bourbon Street reverie. But the unsettling triumph represented by ticker

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*The text of this article was first presented  
at the Annual Meeting  
of the American Educational  
Research Association,  
New Orleans, Louisiana, April 26, 2000.*

*A version of this article will appear  
in an Australian volume  
edited by Bill Cope and Mary Kazantatis  
and sections of this article will also  
appear in the following articles: Peter  
McLaren, Aimee M. Carillo-Rowe, Rebecca  
L. Clark, and Philip A. Craft (in press),  
"Decentering strategies of white racial  
domination," in Glenn Hudak and Paul  
Kihn (Eds), *Labelling: Politics, Identity,  
and Pedagogy*, New York: Routledge; Peter  
McLaren and Jill Pinkney-Pastrana (in  
press), "Cuba, Yanquización, and the cult  
of Elián Gonzalez: A view from the  
'Enlightened States,'" *International  
Journal of Qualitative Studies in  
Education* (a special issue on Cuba, edited  
by Denise Blum and Peter McLaren).*

tape parades and local beer hall celebrations only serves to momentarily deflect attention from the millions of exploited men, women, and children around the world. The challenge of turning the country into one giant theme park to entertain the ruling class has not been met in all corners of the globe, and the opposition is withering away by the minute. More and more countries are donning what William Greider has called globalization's "golden straight-jacket" of "follow our orders, and we will make you rich (someday)"—forced austerity programs orchestrated by institutions such as the International Monetary Fund that dictates what foreign governments may or may not do (2000, p. 14).

Despite all the fanfare surrounding the promises of free trade, it remains the case that both advanced and developed countries have been hurt by globalization. Only a few metropolitan centers and select social strata have benefited, and it is no secret who these select occupants are. It's not the case that the poor are next in line to become millionaires. That's not part of the overall scheme. The success of Regis has brought with it his repressed double, the unemployed worker who returns to visit the scene of his firing to do some 'firing' of his own, only this time through the barrel of an automatic rifle as he guns down his ex-boss and fellow workers. No, the poor are not next in line to enter free market heaven.

In fact, the poor are completely written out of the script; they serve as permanent extras for the background shots for larger

millionaire *novelas* of fame for the lucky few, and misery and poverty for the unlucky many. The functional integration among production, trade, global financial markets, and transport and speed technologies that make financial transactions instantaneous, have facilitated the re-deployment of capital to "least-cost" locations that enable exploitation on the basis of advantages it will bring to those wishing to become part of the "Millionaires R Us Club."

As global assembly lines increase, and as speculative and financial capital strikes across national borders in commando-like assaults ("move in, take the goods, and move out"), the state continues to experience difficulty in managing economic transactions but has not yet detached itself from the infrastructure of corporate imperialism. Transnational corporations and private financial institutions—Gold Card members of the leading worldwide bourgeoisie—have formed what Robinson and Harris (2000) call a "transnational capitalist clan." And while the emergent global capitalist historic bloc is marked by contradictions in terms of how to achieve regulatory order in the current global economy, national capitals and nation states continue to reproduce themselves. Home markets have not disappeared from the scene since they continue to provide ballast for the imperialist state through ensuring the general conditions for international production and exchange.

Liberal democracies like to pretend that the state is a separate and autono-



# A Notebook on Forging a Revolutionary Politics

mous sphere of activity because that way they can set up convenient smokescreens against the internal workings of the capitalist production process. They can also prevent the staggering exposure of capitalism's zero-sum game and hinder our understanding of the indivious ways in which the state actually functions to sustain and promote the capitalist system. Not to mention the ways in which the state locates blame within individuals (they are too lazy, ignorant, unskilled) rather than within their conditions of existence (i.e., the value form of wealth that is historically specific to capitalism). Within liberal democracies, individuals are conveniently held responsible for their own poverty as blame is shifted away from the capitalist race to the bottom to see who can prosper with the minimum or lowest standards of social and economic justice as well as environmental protection and sustainability. The blame is always shifted away from the means by which surplus-value is created through the internal or dialectical relation that exists between labor and capital—that is, away from the way workers are locked into an internal and antagonistic relation to capital in the most alienating and dehumanizing of ways—and away from the fact that exploitation is a constitutive feature of the capitalist production process (Allman, in press).

The globalization of capitalism is not in any way accountable to democratic interest, yet its cheerleaders have hidden its diabolical nature behind the non-sequitur claim that the free market promotes democracy.

In fact, self-determining governments only get in the way of the goal of transnational corporations, which is “to open all domestic markets, natural resources, built infrastructures, and labor pools of all societies of the world to foreign transnational control without the barrier of self-determining government and people in the way” (McMurtry, 1999, p. 58). The real agenda of transnational corporations is, in other words, to create an anti-welfare capitalism with a human face while drawing attention away from the paradoxical congeniality of capitalism and its repressed underside.

The current mind-set of global capitalism can, in fact, be traced to the Trilateral Commission of 1973 (composed of the world's leading corporate CEOs, academics, government officials, etc.), who argued that there existed “an excess of democracy” in the Western world and who advocated the legitimacy of hierarchy, coercion, discipline, secrecy, and deception, as well as the non-involvement of a governable democracy (McMurtry, 1999). Mutagenic capitalist values have transmogrified into a social ethos, making it easier for flim-flam financial ventures to proliferate, breaking the tenuous accord that has long existed between labor and capital. Adam Smith's notion of the market as a servant of the public good through the shared ‘wealth of nations’ has achieved the status of a good joke in bad taste. Arching over the blandishments of the value program of the global market is the aerosol figure of George ‘Dubya’ Bush, who is not merely content to

have stolen the election through voter cleansing in his brother Jeb's state of Florida, but is determined to realize his potential for manifest delusion and to exercise a stubborn willingness to give away billions of dollars of tax cuts to the wealthiest one percent of the population. Bush not only lacks moral intelligence, but he serves as an understudy for such a lack. He's already upstaged Dan Quayle in the ‘wasted mind’ department, but it remains to be seen what his boss, Dick Cheney, has in mind for him.

How has the globalization of capital fared? The economic performance of industrial countries under globalization in the 1980s and 1990s is much poorer than during the 1950s and 1960s when they operated under a more regulated social-market economy (Singh, 2000). Economic growth as well as GDP growth has been lowered and productivity has been cut in half; in addition, unemployment has risen dramatically in the OECD countries.

That the United States has fared better on the issue of unemployment than Western European countries cannot be attributed to the less flexible labor markets of the latter, nor on the information technologies revolution. In the case of Japan and Korea, their periods of fast economic growth, poverty reduction, and raises in the standard of living was under managed trade and capital controls, not laissez-faire evangelism. When Korea, Malaysia, and Indonesia, for example, liberalized their external capital flows they suffered economic meltdowns (Singh, 2000).

Latin American countries that have liberalized their trading and external capital regimes have suffered from fall outs and from severe financial crises, including the peso crisis of 1994-95 in Mexico and the "Samba effect" of 1999 in Brasil. Latin American countries following the Washington consensus have, since the late 1980s, experienced a long-term growth rate reduction from 6 percent per annum to 3 percent per annum (Singh, 2000).

The battle over free trade is not only about profits. It's also about manufacturing ideology. Globalization has been a dismal failure for the vast majority of the world's capitalist nations. And yet the corporate elite refuse to concede defeat. In fact, they are boldly claiming victory and, furthermore, that history is on their side. In a sense they are correct. But we have to understand that they are speaking for themselves. They have been victorious. In fact, they've made millions. The question remains: At whose expense?

Global capitalism has won the battle over ideology hands down. Global capitalist monocacy has declared itself victorious over socialist and communist ideologies. The latter are being auctioned off at Sotheby's as relics of class struggle from bygone eras, to be archived in museums dedicated to democracy's victory over the evil empires spawned by Mr. Marx. For now, capitalism has succeeded in steering the wheels of history to the far right, to a head-on collision with the reigning neoliberal bloc, where postmodernized signposts on the streets declare the triumph of privatization over socialization, individualism over collectivism, life-style identity politics over class politics, cynicism over hope, and barbarism over civilization.

Capitalism has become our ticket to the gaudy world of tinsel dreams and chloroformed hope, to a subterranean public sphere where *American Psycho* replaces Che Guevara as the icon of the postmodern revolution. Under the beguiling eye of "high stakes" financial investors, a two-tiered laboring class has been created, with low-skill, low-paid service workers toiling alongside a small segment of highly skilled and well-paid workers. For the millions of people whose lives remain commodified and regulated in the charnel house of "fast-track" capital accumulation and its seductive companion, consumer ideology, the clearly visible contradictions within capitalist social and economic relations of production have become too obvious to be recognized. They have been naturalized as common sense. After all, the buying and selling of human lives as commodities—the creation of what Marx called "wage slaves"—must be guar-

anteed as a constitutive factor of our democracy, so this condition is carefully disguised as a "voluntary contractual agreement," even though the only alternatives to shaking the sweaty palm of the market's invisible hand are starvation, disease, and death. Liberals and conservatives alike love to heap fulsome praise on the United States as the world's bastion of freedom while ignoring the abysmal disparities between effort and reward. Marxists know otherwise. The only "free" cheese is in the mousetrap.

Postmodern theorists recognize these contradictions but are largely unable to develop a counter-hegemonic politics except by restructuring their observations to the culture plane and thereby obfuscating the political economy of real existing capitalism. Neil Larsen warns that

at best, the culturalist account of globalization results in mere descriptivism—e.g., the work of Garcia Canelini. At worst—e.g., Baudrillard or Bhabha—it results in the kind of pseudo-theory that simply reads off certain of the lateral effects of globalization (e.g., the hybridization of national cultures or the manipulation of global opinion through the mass dissemination of CNN-type 'news' simulacra) as the fantasmagorical sites for its subversion or its eternal replication. This is reified thinking taken to the extreme of mistaking the empty shell of a globalized commodity form for the social, human content that it progressively fails to contain. (2000, p. 4)

The social and political antagonisms haunting capitalism today are manifold and can be discerned by utilizing the optic of historical materialist critique. On the one hand, we witness firsthand the vast profusion of material resources able to sustain the livelihood of the six billion inhabitants of the earth, and provide basic necessities including full employment, housing, and health care. On the other hand, the growing bipolarization and the over-accumulation of capital by the new breed of opulent gangster capitalists from reigning global mafiocracies has reduced the odds of surviving hunger, poverty, malnutrition, famine, and disease for a growing segment of working-class men, women, and children who are now joining the ranks of the urban ghettos and global slum dwellers in their *casas de carton* all over the world. We are not talking only about Calcutta and Rio de Janeiro, but our own urban communities from New York to Los Angeles.

Instead of celebrating growing economic democracy worldwide, we are facing growing

inequality the proportions of which stagger the imagination. As Willie Thompson notes: "The trend is precisely in the opposite direction, towards intensified polarization, the concentration of misery, suffering, deprivation and hopelessness at the lower end of the scale, mirrored by exorbitant and unceasing accumulation [of capital] at the other pole..." (1997, pp. 224-225). Whether by increasing the extortion of absolute surplus-value through the proliferation of *maquiladoras* along the U.S.-Mexican *frontera*, or increasing relative surplus value extortion through increasing the productivity of labor and reducing the value of labor power, capitalism continues to hold living human labor hostage, fetishizing its own commodity logic and valorization process, and recasting the world into its own image. Value—the medium and the outcome of abstract labor—binds individuals to its law of motion. Like Ahab, lifelessly thrashing about on the body of Moby Dick as the White Beast submerges itself into the icy fathoms of eternity, we are carried into the future on the backs of our worst nightmare, in a ghoulish parody of life. Spawned in the social universe of capital, our nightmares chart the course of civilization, illuminated by the dark lamp of history.

According to James Petras, "The boom in the U.S. is fueled in part by an exaggerated speculative bubble that is unsustainable. Stocks are vastly overvalued; savings are negative and the performance of the productive economy has no relation to the paper economy" (2000, p. 16). He further notes that it is clear "that one quarter of the capitalist world cannot prosper when three quarters are in deep crisis—the laws of capitalist accumulation cannot operate in such restricted circumstances" (2000, p. 16).

## Is History Having Fun Yet? Are We Already Tired of the Future?

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the cataclysmic social and political implosions in Russia and Eastern European countries coincides with the premature "end-of-ideology" proclamations and correlative self-canceling pronouncements about the end of history hailed by conservative social theorists such as Francis Fukuyama. In classic red-bating style, Fukuyama has announced the end of revolutionary movements and the demise of socialism altogether. However, in their mad dash towards capitalist utopia, the growing lumpen-proletariats in ex-socialist European countries, drunk on the prospect of get-rich-quick schemes and of reaping enormous windfalls, are stumbling over the corpse of Lenin and learning the lessons of privatization and the empty

promises of market socialism the hard way. Of course, Russia is not the only country being deceived by capitalism's promises of prosperity. Thousands of workers in countries whose dictators borrowed from the World Trade Organization—and who stealthily pocketed most of the profits—are suffering through imposed austerity programs in which they have been made to assume repayment of international loans. If the postmodernists want to brag about the disappearance of the U.S. working class and celebrate the new culture of lifestyle consumption, then they need to acknowledge that the so-called disappearing working class in the U.S. is reappearing again in the assembly lines of China, Brasil, Indonesia, and elsewhere, where there exist fewer impediments to U.S. profit-making (Zizek, 2000).

The world's greatest exponent of class struggle, Karl Marx, still remains under attack (in itself not such a surprising observation). The opponent grabbing the headlines this time is a prominent spokesperson for evolutionary psychology. Maintaining that the Talmud and Tanakh has, over the centuries, ordered Jews to adopt an unconscious eugenics program by insisting that they practice endogamy in order to remain racially pure, California State University, Long Beach professor Kevin MacDonald has recently and infamously argued that Jewish emphasis on group cooperation has resulted in Jews having significantly higher IQs than other ethnic groups (Ortega, 2000).

Used by publicity-hungry British historian David Irving as an expert witness in a libel lawsuit against Professor Deborah Lipstadt and Penguin books (a case in which Irving claimed that there were no gas chambers at Auschwitz, and, fortunately, a case that he lost), MacDonald not only argued that Judaism is an evolutionary group strategy used to discipline genes as part of a social program of increasing Jewish intelligence beyond other groups and thus ensuring group survival (a strategy that he claims was copied by the Nazis in their philosophy of Aryan superiority developed as a defense against the Jews), he also accused Marxism of being a subversive Jewish-controlled intellectual movement responsible for untold deaths: "In the 20th century many millions of people have been killed in the attempt [by Jews] to establish Marxist societies based on the ideal of complete economic and social leveling, and millions of people have been killed as a result of the failure of Jewish assimilation into European societies" (MacDonald, cited in Ortega, 2000, p. 14).

Here we see both bad science and racist

logic taken to the nauseating heights of actually blaming the Holocaust on the Jews themselves and blaming the victims of so-called Marxist regimes on Jewish political theory. The Cold War may be over, but science has a way of returning, time and time again, to the scene of history's greatest crimes and persecuting its victims all over again.

## Technology as Snake Oil

Despite the collapse of any significant opposition movements to neo-liberal capitalism, educators have been encouraged to be optimistic as they navigate their way through the first precarious stage of the

comet comes crashing from its heavenly heights, smack into the swirling ocean of economic uncertainty.

Teachers are told that they are entering a new post-industrial, high-tech information era that will usher in a gilded age of prosperity for themselves and their students. As James Petras (2000) notes, however, this characterization of current economic conditions is patently false, since computer industries represent less than three percent of the economy. The electronic superhighway permits financial capital to move with the speed of greased lightning. As capitalism strives to "annihilate...space with time" (Marx, [1858] 1993, p. 539), it



we are saying

certainly is no longer a secret.

What is new is the stage-managed resignation that has accompanied the news. When we learn that Latino students are twice as likely as African-Americans and three times as likely as whites to drop out of high school...the information registers but somehow

Centers to Enrage Us

new millennium. Even though the contradictions of capitalism abound, as the homeless stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the affluent on the crowded streets of our urban megalopolises, teachers still cling to the Malthusian dream of living in the best of all possible worlds. Such engineered optimism and its accompanying incapacity for dissent has helped capitalism to survive for decades through a low-intensity democracy, driven by pitiless bureaucrats who provide just enough equality to keep people from taking to the streets in acts of civil disobedience.

But even this unstated alliance among ruling interests is breaking down, as recent anti-WTO events in Seattle and Washington D.C. attest. While Jean-Bertrand Aristide can recently note that "history moves in waves—we cannot always live on the crests" (2000, p. 56), the planet remains ill-prepared for the impact that the crisis of globalization is currently having on the already poverty-stricken. If the situation already appears out of control, what will happen when we face the Tsunami that will smother vast populations when capital's

displaces labor in North America while increasing exploitation in Latin America. In this predominately financial-industrial economy, government leaders in league with privateers and laissez-faire evangelists like to hype the information age-era stuff, because in doing so it is easier for them to generate false optimism about the future, and to draw attention away from the fact that prosperity is largely confined to speculative-financial and real estate sectors of the capitalist class at a time when retrenchment by the state is draining resources from the poor and redirecting them to already bulging pockets of the rich.

By creating a façade of information era utopianism through carnival-like hucksterism that accompanies the corporate invasion of our classrooms, calls for educators to be converted into McTeachers, and a computer technology millenarianism that assures salvation through Internet consciousness, potential criticism can be siphoned away from the fact that we live in an era marked by monopolistic giants, greedy conglomerates, snake oil privateers, and selec-

tive protectionists who support massive state subsidies, the selling-off of public enterprises to private monopolies, welfare for the rich, domestic and overseas multi-billion-dollar money laundering, arms industry domination of the export sector, and the placing of key state institutions under the influence of financial sectors of civil society—in short, an era populated by capitalist Overworlders who support the creation of a social order in which class warfare runs amok (Petras, 2000).

Teachers are also taught that the Internet will “equalize” society. That is yet another myth. Borders are not transcended but reinscribed. The Internet is supposed to dissolve distance through simultaneity. Yet, as Randy Martin notes, information and communication technology has created a spatial unevenness “characterized by densities of access and vast exclusions” (1999, p. 10). Such technology reinscribes boundaries—especially when those boundaries occur within those strata with “high regime status” (1999, p. 10). Martin notes importantly that the “info-poor and hidden masses are a spatial effect of technology and not merely those next in the queue to get on-line” (1999, p. 10).

Of course, the marketization, privatization, and neo-liberalization of schooling is functionally advantageous to the conditions described above. Although it has been smuggled in under cover of a revival of the democratic imperative of privatization, schooling has been reduced to a sub-sector of the economy and continues to provide ballast for existing discourses and practices of class exploitation and white supremacist heteronormative patriarchy (Hill, 1999; Cole, 1998; Rikowski, 1997).

What we are saying certainly is no longer a secret. What is new is the stage-managed resignation that has accompanied the news. When we learn that Latino students are twice as likely as African-Americans and three times as likely as whites to drop out of high school, or that, in 1997, 25.3 percent of Latinos aged 16 to 24 dropped out of high school compared with 13.4 percent of African Americans and 7.6 percent of whites (McQueen, 2000), the information registers but somehow ceases to enrage us. Part of the reason for this is that exploitation through the capitalist marketplace has been so naturalized and the pauperization of the state so dehistoricized and depoliticized that we have learned to accept a certain amount of exploitation and accompanying forms of racism and sexism and homophobia. We feel that it is an inevitable part of living in a developed capitalist democracy.

What we fail to grasp is that capitalism and democracy actually work against each

other and the familiar coupling of the two words is really just a form of linguistic—hence ideological—mystification. We guess that rationale is: If we keep hearing the term “capitalist democracy” frequently enough, we will begin to believe that the two terms are inseparable and unconsciously strip the terms of their association with domination.

In fact, the two terms need to be torn apart, not yoked together. Maybe another adjective needs to precede the term “democracy.” Maybe “socialist democracy” is a more appropriate coupling for those who wish to make democracy live up to its egalitarian ideals. But since we have been enculturated throughout the Cold War to get a headache even at the mere mention of the word “socialism,” it is unlikely we will ever see the topic of “socialist democracy” appear with any mounting regularity in the journals devoted to educational reform, at least not anytime soon.

California is often a precursor to the dominant scenarios of U.S. futurity. It is the state that passes propositions (i.e., 187, 209, 227) that routinely are given birth through a marriage of political Monday-morning-quarterbacks in the form of rich businessmen like Ron Unz, and manic, mean-spirited, right-wing populists such as Pat Buchanan, Peter Wilson, and their ilk. California’s political initiatives often serve as political harbingers for a politics that will eventually spread throughout other states like a runaway contagion, mixing racism, sexism, bourgeois historical amnesia, class arrogance, and homophobia into a political cocktail as wickedly dangerous as any biological weapon invented by the Pentagon.

California is a state that generates a lot of tension around educational reform—a tension that can be traced largely to mind numbing ethnocentrism, Angloelitism, and social frameworks of perception and classification that are inextricably connected to the current climate of Latinophobia. This is not hard to understand in an antagonistic geopolitical arena where scapegoating immigrants from Mexico is a commonplace and accepted practice. California is also where the English Only movement is gaining momentum.

Donaldo Macedo captures the absurdity of the English Only proponents who argue that English is the most effective language for citizens of the United States, and that it is the language that will best guarantee a successful future:

First, if English is the most effective educational language, how can we explain why over 60 million Americans are illiterate or functionally illiterate? Second, if English Only edu-

cation can guarantee linguistic minorities a better future, as educators like William Bennett promise, why do the majority of Black Americans, whose ancestors have been speaking English for over two hundred years, find themselves still relegated to the ghettos? (2000, p. 2)

In the midst of the widening scenario of immigrant bashing, it is not difficult to make the case that democracy has been discounted, its attempts at civic renewal and invigoration of the public sphere even rendered detumescent. Two types of reactions predominate. The first is to engage in a half-revolution through “reformist” efforts, underwritten by a teleological belief in the evolution of democracy through the free market. The second is to engage in political activism that cuts to the heart of neoliberalism, corporate control of the schooling process, and capitalist relations of exploitation. While the former beggars the praxis of critical struggle, the latter lacks a coherent national and international strategy.

Neo-liberalism lingers on with the lethal stubbornness of spent uranium in a U.S. military armor-piercing shell. With the exception of the Seattle and Washington antiglobalization campaigns, opposition to neoliberalism has been muted, thanks to the polished statecraft of Clinton and his successful cheerleading for an unfettered free market, under cover, we might add, of a Third Way detente between Keynesian economics and ultra-capitalism. Opposition has also been blunted through the efforts and cagey triumphalism of New Right apologists of the free market. The colonial apotheosis of New Right heroes such as Pat Buchanan, Donald Trump, Jesse Ventura, and George W. Bush, and the brain-stunting banality of their political platforms, has met with a lack of any real spirited opposition among the educational left. But this is partly due to lack of any rival oppositions to global capitalism either nationally or on a world scale. For the foreseeable future the left has painted itself into a corner. But it can only truck with pessimism for so long.

## Capitalism as Cultism

The recent custody battle surrounding Elián Gonzalez, the young Cuban boy, resulted in a gaudy Cold War side show that amounted to little more than a continuous advertising display for the virtues of capitalism. The protagonists in this case were the Miami Mafia, who argued vociferously that Elián should be kept in the United States with his great uncle, Lazaro, and Janet Reno, who represented the U.S. government.

The Miami Mafia functioned collectively and cohesively as an integrated anti-Communist lobby, proselytizing against Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution. By counter-posing capitalist values of freedom and democracy to the evil empire of Cuba, the Miami Mafia functions as a cult of capitalism. Their temple of worship is the high-tech retail mega-mall bathed in the perfumed images of Havana in the early 1950s. In their fervent defense of the "American way of life" the Miami Mafia participates in various "ideological" practices that uncritically support the "furies of private interest." In fact, its anti-communist declarations constitutes a type of brainwashing that is awash in every corner of United States society, from school assemblies, to television programming, to magazine advertisements, to the local gossip at the corner store. Such values, democratic or otherwise, rarely stand alone.

In this instance, they are conditioned by worldwide corporations who exercise dominant control over what is believed by the exiles to be a "free" and "open" market where producers and sellers compete on an equal playing field. Lost in this equation is the fact that these corporate oligopolies—also known as emergent supranational institutions—are linked to a global social structure of accumulation that works to enforce economic, political, and cultural norms. These "capitalist" norms have become the regulating mechanisms of what has been called "the New World Order." Elite-based polyarchies operating as a transnationalized state work to consolidate ideological-cultural practices—and it is the combined effect of these practices that is the real wizard behind the glittering façade of Uncle Sam's OZ (see Robinson, 1998).

We would be deluded to think that the missionaries of the New World Order are limited to business oligarchs or right-wing pugilists and their rhetorical ejaculations. In fact, the New World Order has an unstated agreement with many liberal democrats who have been in bed with anti-communists and opponents of the far left since the early days of the Cold War when numerous U.S. and European writers were only too eager to denounce socialism, communism, or anything their pro-imperialist masters considered "anti-American." Appearing on the CIA payroll, writing for CIA-sponsored journals, or working for the CIA-run Congress for Cultural Freedom were such notables as Isaiah Berlin, Daniel Bell, Czeslaw Milosz, George Orwell, Sidney Hook, Hannah Arendt, Dwight MacDonald, Robert Lowell, Stephen Spender, Melvin Lasky, Mary McCarthy, and Irving Kristol, to name just a few (see Saunders, 1999;

Petras, 1999). Who do you think owns most of the U.S. mass media? Who are the Lords of the Marketplace?

A question never asked by the Miami-based adherents of this market theodicy is the price one pays to live in a truly "free and efficient market." In other words, what is the price that one pays for not selling one's labor to a master? For those who do not follow this fundamentalist market theology and its accompanying declaration of human freedom, misery, and starvation result. The Miami Mafia fails to question a claim made by philosopher John McMurtry (1998), that "freedom" in capitalist democracy lies within the moral commandments of the market's rule, in particular the com-

corporate revenues and profits, on the one hand, is perceived as good and to be approved and what decreases corporate revenues and profits is bad and to be condemned. He claims that this prescriptive duality of Good and Bad is no less absolute and binding than religious commandments.

Our argument is that the "free market" decrees absolute commandments of non-intervention. The "invisible hand," to which all alike must submit, that lies at the center of market command and that permeates the sociocultural orders in which we are nested, is, in reality, the bloc fortunes of several hundred billionaires who own as much wealth as almost half the globe's population put together, the interlocking

We need to recognize...that there is no positive value that can be given to the social position known as whiteness. The term cannot be recovered, or given a positive spin. White people need to disidentify entirely with the white race.

mand that no one is to interfere with its smooth, unfettered movement.

The anti-Castro cultists seek their salvation in capitalist market doctrine and their undiminished and militant faith in the frictionless character of its market laws. Such a position removes the inconvenience of having to undress such laws so as to reveal their inner workings and to evaluate the consequences of such laws in the lives of millions of poor and suffering children. It excuses them from the burden of insight into how the United States, as global imperialism's alpha male, rapaciously enforces those laws. The received doctrine of the market with its principles of classical market theory and its market value program are upheld at any price, even if it means dismissing people as disposable and, as McMurtry notes, even if it means accepting that people will starve to death if they are not hired for profitable use in an oversupplied labor market.

McMurtry describes capitalism's value program as informed by a totalitarian master discourse in which the ultimate vehicle of value is the corporate person, and the ultimate measure of value is money profitability. In other words, what increases

directorates of multinational corporations, and global intrafirm trading empires that dominate the market's base of supply and demand. These ruling positions of the global market hierarchy participate in a regulating paradigm of mind and reality in which the ultimate value system supporting democracy is comprised by the laws of the market, which seemingly exist prior to and independent of society. In other words, they ARE the laws of nature and of God (McMurtry, 1998).

The value system of the market doctrine before which Miami's anti-Castro cultists kneel in slack-jawed reverence supports the efforts of free marketeers, oillionaires, and global carpetbaggers to harass, to torture, and to murder union and community organizers who fight for legislative protection of citizen rights. Do these Cultists for Capital know that they are supporting a value system that is purposively eroding job security and protection from hazardous working conditions?

The Miami Mafia has attempted to inject its anti-Castro invective into a pro-American discourse without revealing that the source of their hatred towards Castro's Cuba is the fact that Castro took away their



class privileges, their property ownership, and their accompanying ability to exploit the poverty-stricken who labored under the iron fist of dictator Fulgencio Batista. Castro will never be forgiven for closing down the casinos and brothels and nationalizing all business, depriving the U.S. Mafia and U.S. based multinationals of a profitable cash cow. They will never forgive Castro for surviving the scores of assassination attempts carried out by the CIA.

In their paeans directed at Elián, the miracle child, the anti-Castro cultists deflect attention from the 40 year economic war waged against the people of Cuba. The embargo imposed by the United States denies food, medicine and other supplies whose lack the cultists rejoice in pointing out in their tirades against the conditions of poverty in Cuba. We find it interesting that Senators such as Trent Lott and Lonnie Mack protested the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) raid to reunite Elián with his father yet supported efforts to triple the size of the INS police forces. Surely they know that INS raids occur all the time—especially against undocumented immigrants.

What is clear is that the Miami Mafia does not want a normalization of relations between the U.S. and the Cuban government since the future of Cuba must, in their view, be linked to their right-wing organizations in Miami. The U.S. left has largely abandoned the Elián saga to a Manichean struggle between those who argue for family values (e.g., return Elián to his father) versus those who vehemently oppose communism (Elián must remain in the U.S. because in Cuba's supposedly totalitarian regime he will lose his autonomy and become a member of the group mind). Lost in the public debate was the central role of capitalism as a social relation of exploitation and an instrument of social control.

## The Abolition of Whiteness

Spurred on by a lack of opposition to the race, class, gender, and class exploitation that has been bolstered by neo-liberal policies worldwide, multicultural education continues to defang its most emancipatory possibilities by calling for diversity in isolation from an interrogation of its center of sameness known as the hegemony of whiteness. It is this sameness that is the distillate of colonialism, and the ether of white lies that spikes the very air we breathe.

Slavoj Žižek has pointed out that in the Left's call for new multiple political subjectivities (e.g., race, class, feminist, religious), the Left asserts its exact opposite—"an underlying all-pervasive same-

ness—a non-antagonistic society in which there is room for all manner of cultural communities, lifestyles, religions, and sexual orientations" (2000, p. 39). Žižek reveals that this Sameness relies on an antagonistic split.

We believe that this split results from the labor-capital relation sustained by white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. This is why we need to join Noel Ignatiev, David Roediger, and others in calling for the abolition of whiteness. We need to recognize (as we have tried to make clear in our work over the years) that there is no positive value that can be given to the social position known as whiteness. The term cannot be recovered, or given a positive spin. White people need to disidentify entirely with the white race. To seek any kind of identity with a white race—or political détente—is ill-conceived at best.

As Theodore Allen (1994, 1997) notes, the social function of whiteness is social control, a practice which has colonial origins that can be traced back to the assault upon tribal affinities, customs, laws, and institutions of Africans, native Americans, and Irish by English/British and Anglo-American colonialism. Such insidious practices of social control reduce all members of oppressed groups to one undifferentiated social status beneath that of any member of the colonizing population. With the rise of the abolitionist movement, racial typologies, classification systems, and criteriologies favoring whiteness and demonizing blackness as the lowest status within humanity's "great chain of being" became widespread in order to justify and legitimize the slavery of Africans and ensure the contribution of lifetime chattel bond-servitude.

White racial identity found its way into Euro-American consciousness at the end of 17th century during a period when the Southern plantocracy recognized that African slaves were a more profitable venture than indentured servants who were primarily from impoverished European backgrounds. Thus, by the beginning of the 1700s, half of the labor force consisted of slave labor.

While there existed two million slave owners in the South by 1860, 75 percent of slaves belonged to 8,000 plantation owners (representing 7 percent of the total slave owners). Moreover, the economic power of the small yet powerful planter class enabled them to wield political power over five million Europeans who did not own slaves.

In order to fracture intraclass consciousness between European indentured servants and African slaves, the plantocracy

offered the indentured servants a place in the corporate infrastructure of the plantocracy where they were given the role of policing the behavior of the Africans. This also included the right to citizenship and a "white" identity. The theologian, Thandeka (1999), identifies this as a form of "white classism." Offering white identity to indentured Europeans allowed them to identify "racially" with the plantation owners. In addition, it manufactured a class illusion by having poor whites identify with the class interests of plantation owners without enjoying any of their economic privileges. Eventually, white racism allowed poor whites to blame Africans for their economic hardships while harmonizing the class conflict between plantation owners and poor whites. While the African slaves were fully aware that they were victims of white racism, poor Europeans failed to recognize that they were the victims of white classism.

By granting racial/corporate membership to the European bond-laborer who had the responsibility of preventing rebellion against the dominant center, the corporate state that emerged out of the plantocracy was able to survive and flourish. Poor white laborers were offered membership in the corporate plantocracy in order to control the subalterned non-white labor force. Whites were thus given a double role: as workers and as white people. White laborers were given membership at the center of the corporate plantation structure while still serving as a marginalized labor force. By using whiteness as a means of guaranteeing allegiance, the plantocracy secured its hegemony through white solidarity and the integration of labor relations (wage labor, prison labor, etc.) into the white confraternal society or what Martinot calls the "overarching white social machine" (2000, p. 50). Whiteness or white solidarity became an "administrative apparatus" of the slave/class economy that served as a "matrix of social cohesion" that located whites "in a structural relation to each other" (2000, p. 52).

Whiteness became such a powerful social/corporate social position that class struggle often fell short of actually challenging the basis of the corporate structure because such a structure was synonymous with profitability and allegiance. The white working class—in order to become a class in itself and for itself—had, tragically, to exist in collaboration with white capital. White corporate society functioned as the ruling class with respect to the nonwhite people that it exploited. Martinot further points out that because white workers in the United States have a different relation



to black workers (since the former belong to the corporate state) and because the primary relation between white workers and capital is not mainly across the means of production but through a social administrative hierarchy whose purpose is to administer those 'Others' who exist outside the corporate state, the idea of working-class struggle aimed at the overthrow of class society "has never made sense to the white working class in the United States" (2000, p. 56) whose resistance to class exploitation rarely attempted to undermine profitability or contested its legitimacy. This helps to explain why, in Martinot's words, "Marxism has never extended itself beyond trade union consciousness because it was never able to fathom the structure of white solidarity by which the white working-class was constructed" (2000, p. 56). African Americans today are sometimes granted the status of recognition of black worker but only as "adjuncts to white hegemony" or as "white-by-association" (2000, p. 56).

The initial objective of white racism was not to construct racial boundaries so much as to maintain class relations. Racism was instrumental in protecting Virginia's class structure by ensuring that poor whites and blacks would not recognize their common class interests. In short, racism was an instrument for maintaining and reproducing the plantocracy's property relations. Of course, what transpired throughout the brutal history of European and United States imperialism and colonialism was that African Americans became literally denounced and relegated to the bottom tier of a social hierarchy that functioned like a caste system with African Americans being positioned as "untouchables." The brutal torture and murder of African slaves and the history of racism against African Americans up to the present day constitutes one of the world's most shameful legacies. Another of the world's most shameful historical legacies involves the genocidal practices of Europeans and Euro-Americans in the massacre of North America's indigenous peoples. While eliminating capitalism will not bring about the end of racism, it is certainly a necessary step in that direction.

Today "whiteness" has become naturalized as part of our "commonsense" reality. Whiteness is not a unified, homogeneous culture but a social position. As Ignatiev comments:

There is nothing positive about white identity. As James Baldwin said, "As long as you think you're white, there's no hope for you." Whiteness is not a culture. There is Irish culture and Italian culture and American cul-

ture; there is youth culture and drug culture and queer culture. There is no such thing as white culture. Shakespeare was *not* white; he was English. Mozart was not white; he was Austrian. Whiteness has nothing to do with culture and everything to do with social position. Without the privileges attached to it, there would be no white race, and fair skin would have the same significance as big feet. (1998a, p. 199)

Ignatiev (1998b) also warns:

The white race is a club, in which

exploits and degrades them. For those people, whiteness does not bring freedom and dignity. It is a substitute for freedom and dignity. It is for those who have nothing else. Its abolition is in the interests of all those who want to be free, "whites" no less than others.

Ignatiev (1998a) writes that identification with white privilege reconnects whites to relations of exploitation. The answer to this plight, notes Ignatiev, is for whites to cease to exist as whites. Whites "must commit suicide as whites to come

**streamline** multiculturalism remains permeated by the capitalist mode of production through structures of class, race, gender, and sexual

people are normally enrolled at birth, without their consent. Most members go through life following the rules and accepting the benefits of membership without thinking about the costs. Many times, they are not conscious of its existence—until it is challenged, when they rally militantly to its defense. Immigrants to the United States, coming to the club later in life, are often more conscious than natives of the white race as a social rather than a natural formation. The club works like any exclusive club, in that membership does not require that all members be active participants, merely that they defer to the prejudices of others.

The United States, like every capitalist society, is composed of masters and slaves. The problem is that many of the slaves think they are part of the master class because they partake of the privileges of the white skin. The abolitionists' aim is not racial harmony but the abolition of the white race, as part of the mobilization of our side for class war. There are many poor whites in the United States. In fact, the majority of the poor are white. Whiteness does not exempt them from exploitation, it reconciles them to it. It holds down more whites than blacks, because it makes them feel part of a system that

alive as workers or youth or women or artists or whatever other identity will let them stop being the miserable, petulant, subordinated creatures they now are and become freely associated, developing human beings" (1998a, p. 200). He goes on to say:

The task at hand is not to convince more whites to oppose "racism"; there are already enough "antiracists" to do the job. The task is to make it impossible for anyone to be white. What would white people have to do to accomplish this? They would have to break the laws of whiteness so flagrantly as to destroy the myth of white unanimity. They would have to respond to every manifestation of white supremacy as if it were directed against them. (1998a, p. 202)

Although the ideology of whiteness needs to be vigorously critiqued, this task only partially fulfills the requirements for anti-capitalist and anti-racist struggles. What is needed further is an acute recognition of how the ideology of whiteness contributes to the reproduction of class divisions—particularly divisions between working-class Anglo-Americans and ethnic minorities—in order to reinforce existing property relations.

Along with efforts to abolish the white race (not white people, there is, of course, a distinct difference) we must support ef-

forts to abolish capital. While it may be true that the globalization of capital brings in its wake the trappings of democracy, it is important not to mistake these seductive trappings for the real thing. As Perry Anderson notes:

Democracy is indeed now more widespread than ever before. But it is also thinner—as if the more universally available it becomes, the less active meaning it retains. The United States itself is the paradigmatic example: a society which less than half of the citizens vote, 90 percent of congressmen are re-elected, and the price of office is cash by the million. (1992, p. 356)

At this point we would like to mention that we don't want those who advocate the abolition of whiteness or who engage in criticism of white social, cultural, and political practices to be acknowledged as part of a "white movement." We don't want to see academic departments dedicated to white studies, nor do we wish the burgeoning literature on whiteness to serve as yet another vehicle used by white scholars to dominate the academic scene. At the same time, we believe that scholarship that focuses on the intricacies of white hegemony is exceedingly important, provided that such studies also are part of a larger anti-racist and anti-capitalist project dedicated to the abolition of the white race. If white educators wish to transform themselves into agents of social justice (and we would encourage them to do so) then we suggest that they accomplish this as Polish, Irish, Canadian, English, or French, etc., and not by identifying themselves with the vile historical fiction known as the white race.

Radical educators are becoming fed up with white lies. They see through them. They are beginning to attach a language to them and are starting to theorize the issues more completely, and more deeply. Are decorous shifts towards decentralization, rigorous academic standards, multiculturalism, teacher accountability, and parental choice supposed to fool anyone? Have recent attempts to camouflage the deep assumptions of terms such as "accountability" so frequently bruited about by neoliberal pundits these days, effectively blinded teachers to the protofascist elements of the New Right gossellers and free market evangelists? Are teachers fooled by such aerosol terms as "empowerment" that are shouted as much in the board rooms of corporations as they are in teacher education programs? Teachers are no fools, and they are not to be fooled with. While we might inhabit a period of political defeat at the ballot box, we find ourselves on the cusp

of a moral victory as teachers begin to exercise their voices of dissent (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997).

### **Mainstream Multiculturalism Liberals Who Champion Difference**

By focusing on the margins rather than the hegemonic center of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, mainstream multiculturalists have airbrushed the most vexing dilemmas in the liberal humanist call for diversity and have left uncontested the ever-present discourses of liberal democracy and the workability of capital—discourses that naturalize events so that their outcome no longer seems open to debate. By championing the values of a well-tempered democracy, liberal multiculturalists have also left unchallenged the social relations of production.

Latent in the spectrality that has been disclosed by the discursive and representational practices of mainstream multiculturalism is the continuing advance of white supremacist logic and social practices. Ghosted into the ideas of mainstream multiculturalists is a promiscuous fascination with difference and epistemological exoticisms and the return of the erstwhile eclipsed Other. Mainstream multiculturalism remains permeated by the capitalist mode of production through structures of class, race, gender, and sexual domination.

### **Beyond the Mainstream Marxist Multiculturalism**

Marxist multiculturalists recognize the political primacy of making structural changes in the larger social system while fighting the ability of capital to re-absorb reform efforts within its own commodity logic. Consequently, many Marxist multiculturalists see the need for a direct action politics centered around equality, anti-racism, and a politics of difference. This is decidedly not a politics of piecemeal increments. It is a revolutionary praxis for the present that we refer to as "revolutionary multiculturalism." For those who imperiously dismiss Marx as an irrelevant figure to the debate over the future of multicultural society, or who are determined to believe that his vision of communism was similar to those gloomy gray photos of robotized factory workers in the plants of the former Soviet Union, they should try reading Marx. Marx believed that it was possible to create a society based on social relations that would not only help to meet one another's needs, but that would foster a desire to do so. Furthermore, Marx believed that we can only fully realize our individual potential

as human beings through meeting the needs of others, and therefore the greater the diversity of our society, the more fulfilling the society would be for all (Allman, in press). Marx believed that diversity increases our potential to enrich the quality of our lives. (Through September 1999, BBC News Online ran a cyberpoll to discover "the thinker of the millennium." Thousands of people worldwide participated and Karl Marx was ranked number one, followed by Albert Einstein.)

Revolutionary multiculturalism emphasizes the collective experiences of marginalized people in the context of their political activism and social mobilization. We distinguish revolutionary multiculturalism from the dominant ideologies of multiculturalism which seek to legitimize the social order through racial harmony and a national identity based on the "Americanization" of marginalized cultures. As a framework for developing a pedagogical praxis, revolutionary multiculturalism opens up social and political spaces for the oppressed to challenge the various forms of class, race, and gender oppression that are produced and reproduced by dominant social relations.

We believe that by using their lived experiences, histories, and narratives as tools for social struggle (McLaren, 1995), subaltern groups can interpret and reconstruct their oppressive social conditions into meaningful social and political action (McLaren, 1995; 1997). Revolutionary multicultural pedagogy encourages marginalized groups and communities to forge political alliances, and in so doing to eradicate cultural homogeneity by interpreting and (re)constructing their own history (McLaren, 1995). As part of a concerted effort of anti-capitalist struggle, revolutionary multiculturalism seeks to establish social and economic equality in contrast to the conservative and liberal ideology of "equal opportunity" that masks the existing unequal distribution of power and wealth at the heart of capitalist society.

A revolutionary multicultural curriculum in the classroom encourages students to interrogate the multiple meanings of race, class, gender, and sexuality in a postmodern society which playfully and seductively inverts and reverses the true meaning of social equality. In our view, revolutionary multiculturalism has the potential of pressuring democracy to live up to its name by putting bourgeois liberal egalitarianism on the witness stand of history. Cruz (1996) argues that we must refuse the entrapment of the empty promises of bourgeois democracy by

...bringing into political discourse the promises dangled in the ideology of a longer equality enshrined at the core of bourgeois liberal democracy, by giving groups a sense of place in society and in history, by offering the comfort that comes (tendentiously) in being able to say something about who they are, by attempting to re-think morally and reconstruct institutionally the meanings behind egalitarianism, and by insisting that social power be truly empowering, enhancing, and protecting for all. (pp. 32-33)

Here, we follow Joel Kovel in struggling not only against economic conditions but also against the delimiting of the self by capital's conversion of labor power into a commodity. Steadfastness must be exercised while challenging bureaucratic rationalization, possessive individualism, and consumerist desire. As Kovel notes: "It follows that capital must be fought and overcome, not simply at the micro level but as it inhabits and infests everyday life through the structures of bureaucratic rationalization and consumerist desire. However, capital cannot be overcome unless it is replaced, at the level of the subject, with an alternative notion" (1998, p. 109).

It is important to note here that revolutionary multiculturalism does not privilege class oppression over race, gender, or sexual oppression. We believe that by linking anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-homophobic struggles to local and international anti-capitalist struggle, such struggles will be better equipped to succeed in the long run. We are not arguing that race, gender, or sexual oppression be reduced to economic issues, nor do we wish to marginalize or displace the important work that continues to be done in anti-racist and feminist scholarship. To suggest that revolutionary pedagogy is an alternative to work being done in cultural studies is to fall into the "divide and rule" traps of bourgeois capitalist scholarship which fears the establishment of worldwide efforts at alliance building against capital relations of exploitation.

We acknowledge that we live in a heterogeneous society that is constituted by conflicting and contradictory social formations and the diversity of social and cultural life. Yet we also acknowledge that such diversity is a contested one. The question we raise is: Diversity for whom? We do not subscribe to a politics in which specific and disparate social movements are cobbled into a form of artificial, mechanical unification or totality. There has to be some establishment of priorities, a leadership of some kind, although we don't envision returning to the Bolshevik model here.

Neither do we support front organizations of specialized movements but foresee a model in which various groups independently address issues and create new discourses and forms of mobilization. This would take place within an overall form of inter-group and inter-ethnic solidarity. But this would not be a mechanical coalition of diverse groups brought together as a broad-based historical bloc, with each group's goal representing an equal strategic priority. We follow Boris Kagarlitsky in advocating for a "hierarchy of strategic priorities but at the same time a real equality of people in the movement" (2000, p. 71). He articulates the struggle as follows:

We must realize our ecological project,



a critical pedagogy is clearly  
a necessary yet insufficient condition for

REVOLUTIONARY PRACTICE.

we must affirm women's rights and minorities' rights through and in the process of anti-capitalist struggle, not as a substitution or alternative to it. Finally, this does not mean that other movements, not addressing the central issues of the system, must necessarily be seen as enemies or rivals of socialists. These movements are just as legitimate. Everyone has the same rights. It means simply that no one must expect the socialist left to drop its own culture, tradition and, last but not least, its identity for the sake of 'democratic equivalence.' (2000, pp. 71-72)

We must move beyond the liberal socialism of those who espouse radical democracy in order to embrace a unified struggle in which a collective political consciousness is not only possible but necessary. Such a consciousness would involve, after Marx, not only understanding how capital produces social relations, but how capital itself is produced. We don't need to scrap universalism, as the postmodernists would advocate, but rather to assiduously struggle for what Kagarlitsky refers to as an "open universalism" based on a dialogue of cultures (2000, p. 75). After all, universals are not static, they are rooted (routed) in movement. They are nomadically grounded in living, breathing subjects of history who toil and who labor

under conditions not of their own making.

We must continue to attack the restricted Western bourgeois character of Enlightenment universalism but to attack universalism itself is not only foolish but politically dangerous. Bruce Robbins is correct when he asserts that all universal standards are in some way provisional. In other words, they deal with "provisional agreements arrived by particular agents" (1999, p. 74). He goes on to maintain that universal standards "are provided in a situation of unequal power, and they are applied in a situation of unequal power" (1999, p. 74). There is no such thing as a clean universalism that is not tainted by power and interest of some sort. Robbins concludes that "all

universalisms are dirty. And it is only dirty universalism that will help us against the powers and agents of still dirtier ones" (1999, p. 75).

Although we support the Enlightenment's project of universalism, we also recognize its limitations. This is in sharp contrast to those postmodern educators who frequently associate Enlightenment universalism with Eurocentrism's emphasis on objectivity and rationality. While we resist efforts to police the expression of non-European viewpoints, we find the politics of postmodern pluralism—i.e., providing voice to those marginalized social groups who have been denied political participation—to be problematic. The belief that an increased diversity of marginalized voices will automatically ensure that marginalized social groups will gain social, political, and economic demands and interests is politically naive. We argue that the struggle for diversity must be accompanied by a revolutionary socialist politics.

Kenan Malik (1996) asserts convincingly that postmodernism's refutation of universalism is, for the most part, similar to the crude 19th century racial theories which rejected universal categories and instead emphasized relativism. Malik further adds that "in its hostility to universalism and in its embrace of the particular and

the relative, poststructuralism embodies the same romantic notions of human difference as are contained in racial theory" (p. 4). Malik asserts that "while difference can arise from equality, equality can never arise from difference" (p. 4).

We believe that it is important to reject a politics where the left is implicated in the "divide and rule" tactics of the ruling elite. A. Sivanandan describes how such a politics plays out in Britain:

Government funding of self-help groups undermined the self-reliance, the self-created social and economic base, of [groups].... Multiculturalism deflected the political concerns of the black community into the cultural concerns of different communities, the struggle against racism into the struggle for culture.... (cited in Kagarlitsky, 2000, p. 84)

At the current historical juncture, when the workers' movement has been demoralized, supporters of postmodern radicalism have, in effect, strengthened the bourgeoisie.<sup>1</sup> Kagarlitsky writes:

The supporters of identity politics make an assiduous pretence of not knowing a simple, obvious fact: that the quantity of resources and activists at the disposal of the left is extremely limited. This means that in conditions when neo-liberalism threatens the very bases of people's normal human existence, these resources and strengths should not be dispersed over a range of "different, but equal struggles," but should be concentrated as far as possible on the main lines of resistance. Neo-liberal politicians KNOW this, and do not squander their energies on trifles. They turned their fire against supporters of identity politics only after dealing with the labor movement, and they concern themselves with identity politics only to the extent to which it hinders them in carrying out specific tasks. (2000, p. 96)

## Towards a Revolutionary Multicultural Pedagogy

In our view, a critical pedagogy is clearly a necessary yet insufficient condition for revolutionary praxis. A critical pedagogy must be able to endorse the cultural struggles of workers and coordinate such struggle as part of a broader 'cross-border' social movement unionism aimed at organizing and supporting the working-classes and marginalized cultural workers in their efforts to build new international anti-capitalist struggles.

Recognizing that global capitalism has ushered in a period marked by accelerating class polarization along with the upward redistribution of wealth, Edna Bonacich and Richard Appelbaum (2000) propose a strategic deployment of workers' centers as a way of building political movements that would directly address the rights of workers. Such workers' centers would be instrumental in providing basic social services and assisting workers in a number of crucial ways. For instance, they could help workers to fight for higher wages and back pay, in addition to providing legal assistance on issues related to immigration.

In our opinion, political education plays a crucial role in raising workers' revolutionary consciousness and promoting an in-depth understanding of political economy, particularly with respect to the existing antagonisms between capital and labor. Workers' self-education can bring into critical relief the contradictions between democracy and capitalism. In the larger social arena, political education can help workers recognize how imperialism is linked with the rhetoric of "humanitarian aid." Finally, workers' centers can assist in organizing workers to participate in political struggles so crucial to demonstrating the power of the working-class to resist the rule of capital.

A revolutionary multicultural pedagogy recognizes the necessity of a worker-centered pedagogy that is empowering, democratic, participatory, and is also able to address the material conditions of the workers. Thus, the revolutionary multicultural pedagogy we are advocating here is one which stresses worker participation and worker self-organization on the basis of collective economic and political interests. As a consequence, a central practice of a revolutionary multicultural pedagogy is an examination of how identities of workers are lived conjuncturally, particularly in terms of class, race, and gender relations.

The corporate-sponsored multiculturalism that we witness today in school classrooms maintains class and racial divisions by articulating a liberal version of equality that is grounded in equal recognition of cultural practices. While this is a good thing as far as it goes, it overlooks the exploitation of wage labor by focusing for the most part on cultural practices, which mainstream multiculturalists frequently divorce from the social relations of production. In this instance, the social identities of marginalized minorities become articulated around consumption practices rather than production or labor practices. In the same manner, identity politics effectively detaches cultural practices from labor practices.

Multicultural capitalism acknowledges social groups primarily as consumers in the global market. We ignore at our peril capitalism's ability to accommodate differences by linking them to its own global market operations that encompass flexible methods of production and the personification of services and goods for diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic minorities. Capitalism gives recognition to ethnic and racial minorities who possess capital, while minorities without sufficient disposable income are systematically marginalized (LaFeber, 1999).

We believe that a pre-condition for a "globalized borderless capital" is "cross border cooperation" of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic communities of people (LaFeber, 1999). But such cooperation is double-edged. While border-crossing facilitates capitalist flows, it also consolidates the advantage of the capitalist class. Thus, it is imperative that a border pedagogy move beyond the celebration of hybridized identities and pluralism and encompass an analysis of political economy and class exploitation. That is, border pedagogy should engage in a critique of the existing contradictions between capital and labor, the exploitation of labor, and profiteerism. It is a pedagogical struggle that addresses the importance of unity and difference not only as a sense of political mobilization, but also as a practice of cultural authenticity that neither fetishizes tradition nor forecloses its allegiance to traditional knowledges (Grande, 2000). It is a revolutionary project that seeks alliances with diverse groups, while respecting and learning from competing moral visions and a reimagination of the political space surrounding identity (Grande, 2000).

Equal representation does not necessarily guarantee social and economic equality under capitalism. Thus, a revolutionary multicultural pedagogy must refocus on the issue of redistribution of wealth by recognizing that equality must be struggled for within the social relations of production—particularly property relations (McLaren & Farahmandpur, 1999a, 1999b, 2000). A revolutionary multiculturalism undresses capitalism as a pernicious system and exposes regimes of exploitation hitherto silenced or undeclared. It attempts to reveal how relations of exploitation are insinuated into the warp and woof of "embodied" everyday life. As Morris Suzuki notes, "the contemporary world of global capital is not a universe where the non-material has conquered or subordinated the material: it is one where matter and symbol increasingly interpenetrate. We must therefore find ways of looking at po-

litical agency which unite the material and symbolic dimensions of life rather than counterposing them" (2000, p. 70). A revolutionary multiculturalism seeks to map the fault lines of agency, where discourses and social relations converge in the activities of everyday life.

We need nothing short of a social revolution. This mandates not only the transformation of our social and economic condi-

frequently polarizes differences instead of uniting them around the common economic and political interests of marginalized social groups.

We have witnessed the development of crude forms of identity politics where "critical pedagogy" is discussed—often derisively—as an approach reserved for white activists only because it is focused mainly on issues of social class. This posi-

specific forms of exploitation. The unwitting outcome of such an identity politics is a strengthening of the rule of capital. This works to the detriment of all working-class groups. As Linda Gordon notes:

Indeed, while calling attention to the need to acknowledge that others have different experiences, "difference" has had a chilling effect on the struggle to recognize connection. At its worst it suggests that communication is impossible, and may thus make actual communicative experience suspect. It may even deter effort to communicate, which require asking direct questions, risking expressions of ignorance, rejecting the discourse of personal guilt. Just as seriously, difference talk leads us away from specifying the relationships that give rise to gender, racial, class, and many other inequalities and alienations. We need to ask for much, much more than merely respecting difference. (1999, p. 47)

It bears repeating that our aim here is not to ignore the cultural and ethnic identities of marginalized social groups, to relegate anti-racist struggles to a distant sideshow, nor elevate the centrality of capitalist exploitation over racialized social practices, but to argue that one of the most insidious aspects of capitalism is precisely that its relations of exploitation hurt people of color in particularly invidious—and disproportionately disabling—ways. We wish to bring into deeper focus than one often finds in critical race theory or multicultural education, the relationships that obtain among race, gender, ethnic, and class identities with the purpose of articulating a political framework that moves towards transnational ethnic alliances. Our central aim is the abolition of the rule of capital and the forms of exploitation and violence that flourish under capital's watch.

Faced with the uncertainty of the present, some look to religion to save us from ourselves. It has been said that religion is for those who fear hell; but it could also be said that educational activism is for those of us who have already been there. The educational activists of today are those who are not afraid to recognize the type of social evil that we see all around us and to name it as such. And they are committed to fighting the racist, sexist, and corporate evil that still envelopes us even as we move with confidence to face the challenge of the new millennium.

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tions but also the transformation of our relationship to the 'Other.' This also means abolishing the contradictions or the internal relation between capital and labor as well as the value form of wealth that is historically specific to capitalism (Allman, in press). This is necessary in order to break the self-replicating cycle of poverty brought about by money exchange. Here we recognize that many readers might find our platform to be naïve, impractical or hopelessly utopian. We wish to remind these readers that such a turn to socialism in no way diminishes the importance of industrial, post-industrial or technological development, which we believe must continue. However, in our socialist vision, individuals would contribute labor according to ability, and the material means of life would be distributed according to need. Ideally, a redistributive socialism would be followed by the managed obsolescence of the money exchange.

A revolutionary multicultural pedagogy links the social identities of marginalized and oppressed groups—particularly the working-class, indigenous groups, and marginalized populations—with their reproduction within capitalist relations of production. It also examines how the reproduction of social, ethnic, racial and sexual identities, as particular social and cultural constructs, as well as shared histories of struggle, are linked with the reproduction of the social division of labor. It therefore moves beyond the oftentimes fragmented and atomized entrapments of identity politics, which

tion does a disservice to scholars and activists of color who historically have been at the forefront of struggles against class oppression. Furthermore, it artificially truncates the scope and depth of critical pedagogy which—at least in the revolutionary tradition that we are advocating here—is strongly anti-racist, anti-sexist, and anti-homophobic. To pit, for example, critical race theory (for scholars of color) against critical pedagogy (for white scholars) is to set up a false opposition. It does grave injustice to both educators of color and white educators who critically appropriate from the best of both traditions of scholarship and activism. Such a rendition of identity politics is more concerned with who is more "authentically" Asian, Latino/a, African-American, Canadian, Irish, etc., than with understanding the relationship among class oppression, sexism, and racism, or with building active working-class coalitions against multiple forms of exploitation. We are not arguing against cultural authenticity but rather against practices that reduce authenticity to the laws of genetics. We view authenticity in the context of a shared history of struggle and survival. By underscoring the importance of "diversity" without interrogating how capitalist social relations set limits to what passes as diversity and what forms of diversity will be "accepted," these crude forms of identity politics also mask the important connections among the capitalist law of value, the exploitation of human labor, and gender-and-race-

## Note

1. It is interesting to observe that in countries where 'traditional' workers' movements are stronger, the position of women also improved quite dramatically in the 1980s and 1990s (Kagarlitsky, 2000).

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